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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God of our hopes, by Your might the mountains are made firm and the roaring seas are still. You have challenged us to ask, to seek, and to knock in order to receive from Your bounty.

So we ask for Your favor upon the Members of this body that they will do Your will. We seek Your wisdom in order to find solutions to challenges that require more than human ingenuity. And we knock on the door of Your sovereignty, believing that in everything that happens, You are working for our good.

Show us how to find Your truth, even in the midst of error. We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for 1 hour, with the first half of the time being controlled by the majority leader or his designee and the second half of the time controlled by the Democratic leader or his designee.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning we have a period of 1 hour for morning business. Following that hour, the Senate will return to the consideration of the Water Resources Development Act. We are considering that bill under a unanimous consent agreement that allows for seven additional amendments. We will finish that bill today, and that will require votes throughout the course of the day. I expect that not all of the debate time will be used on each of the remaining amendments. If we are able to yield back some time today and if some of the amendments don't require rollcall votes, it is possible to finish early this evening. If Senators begin to use all of the time allocated, it will turn into a much later session with votes. In any event, we will finish the bill today.

Tomorrow we have an order to proceed to the Child Custody Protection Act. I am pleased that we are now able to proceed to that bill without any objection, and I hope we can get an agreement to finish that bill in a reasonable period of time as well.

In addition, this week we have some circuit and district court nominations on the Executive Calendar that will require some votes. We will consider those in all likelihood on Thursday.

I thank my colleagues for their assistance. We have had a very good and very productive week, with our debate on stem cell research, including scientific and ethical issues, over the last couple of days.

VIOLENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, last week, on the morning of July 12, Hezbollah launched a brazen and unprovoked at-

tack on Israeli soldiers patrolling their side of the border with Lebanon in northern Israel. Hezbollah militants killed seven Israeli soldiers and kidnapped two more in the attack. These two soldiers remain captive, presumably somewhere inside of Lebanon.

This Hezbollah attack followed an earlier attack from the Hamas terrorist groups on June 25. Hamas terrorists entered Israeli territory, attacked an Israeli military base, killed two soldiers, and kidnapped another. CPL Gilad Shalit has yet to be released.

Hezbollah and Hamas are terrorists organizations. They receive military and financial support from terror-sponsoring regimes in Damascus and Tehran, and they refuse to recognize Israel's right to exist. In fact, they call for Israel's destruction.

In June 2000, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan deemed Israel in full compliance with Security Council Resolution 425 by completely withdrawing its forces from Lebanon. Yet in the past year alone, Hezbollah has launched at least four separate attacks into Israeli territory using rockets and ground forces. It has blocked implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559 by refusing to disarm and disband its militia.

Last summer, Israel completely evacuated its forces from the Gaza Strip. Instead of demonstrating a willingness and ability to govern responsibly and improve the lives of the Palestinians living there, Hamas has used Gaza as a base to launch rocket attacks and other assaults on the State of Israel, like the one that led to the capture of Corporal Shalit on June 25.

Let us be clear: Hezbollah and Hamas, with the backing of Syria and Iran, are wholly responsible for the recent outbreak of violence in the Middle East.

While it is important for Israel to proceed carefully, we cannot deny its right to self-defense. Prime Minister Olmert's government has a responsibility to the Israeli people to defend

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Israel against terrorist attacks. He has a responsibility to do what he can to prevent similar attacks from occurring in the future.

Israel is an ally—our closest friend in the Middle East. We share its strong commitment to democracy, to the rule of law, and to a peaceful solution to this conflict, a solution that leaves two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Yesterday, the Senate passed a resolution reaffirming its steadfast support for Israel in its fight against these vicious terrorists and other extremists who target Israeli citizens and exploit their own civilian populations as shields.

Hezbollah and Hamas must immediately and unconditionally release the captured Israeli soldiers and cease their rocket attacks against Israel. The state sponsors of these groups in Syria and Iran must be held to account.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, may I inquire about the regular order?

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. We are in morning business with the first half of the time of 1 hour under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I rise today deeply disturbed after watching the situation in Israel continuing to escalate over the last few days. Israel, over the last 3 years, has acted in a responsible manner and done everything possible, in my view, to reach out to those who desire peace. Unfortunately, there remain those who continue to disregard the Israeli State and refuse to recognize its legitimacy.

Sadly, these terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah remain committed to their ideology of hatred toward the Jewish people and appear determined to try to bring an end to the State of Israel. As such, I strongly support Israel's response to the unprovoked kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers and the unprecedented rocket bombardment of northern Israel.

The current Israeli action is justified. Action is necessary to stop those who are responsible for these despicable acts of terror. The attempts to defend Israel and rescue its captured soldiers with airstrikes and incursions by Israeli forces are not only appropriate but are absolutely necessary to protect Israeli citizens from future terrorist attacks.

Ultimately, I believe outside actors, such as Syria and Iran, which continue to support terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah are the main culprits. These nations have done nothing to promote peace in the region. I believe the United States and the community of nations should put these nations on notice that their support for terrorism is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

President Bush has likewise called out Syria and Iran for their support of Hezbollah by stating:

The one way to help heal the Middle East is to address the root causes of the problems there, and the root cause of the problem is Hezbollah and Syria and the Iranian connection.

No one doubts that with the support these nations provide to Hezbollah they could bring an end to the hostilities in the region. Instead, they would rather Hezbollah continue to use innocent citizens as shields while the terrorist organization conducts attacks against a sovereign nation. They need to abide by the already passed United Nations resolution and end support for Hezbollah.

That is why I rise in support of S. Res. 534 condemning Hezbollah and their sponsors, and I also ask to be added as a cosponsor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, our ally, Israel, is entitled to the defense of its land. We as a body should again recognize this act and support Israel's right to self-defense while calling for the Syrians and the Iranians to take responsibility for these open hostilities. They must help immediately to withdraw all terrorist forces from Lebanon and end their support for Hezbollah's action against our allies. We also must ensure that the U.N. Security Council enforces the full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559, which in 2004 called for disarming Hezbollah and the removal of all foreign forces from Lebanon. We must use all of the tools at our disposal to discontinue the financial, military, and political support Hezbollah and Hamas receive from these state sponsors of terror.

Of course, during this crisis I would be remiss if I did not mention my grave concern about the loss of innocent life in Israel, Lebanon, and Gaza. During the past week, Hezbollah has continued to fire rockets and mortars into civilian areas, killing multiple Israelis, among others. As much as I believe it is imperative that the United States stand behind Israel in its time of need, we also must provide assistance to those who have been hurt because of this conflict.

It is my strong belief that the United States should do everything in its power to assure Israel's right to exist and right to protect its borders. Israel must be allowed to live without fear within those borders. It is my hope that this conflict will be resolved peacefully in the coming days. The people of Israel have not asked for more than that, and I believe they certainly deserve as much.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

WORLD SECURITY AND ENERGY

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I have come to the Chamber this morning to talk about energy, an important issue that affects not only our cost of living but our Nation's security. But before I do, I wish to say I was pleased, as my

colleague just mentioned, that last night the Senate voted unanimously to recognize the inherent right of our ally, Israel, to defend itself against terrorist aggression. Israel has a responsibility to protect its citizens, just as the United States does, and no nation should have to live under the constant fear of missile attacks or kidnapping.

The recent violence in the Middle East is demonstrating how broad this global war against radical Islamic murderers really is and how much nations such as Iran and Syria are funding these radical extremists. As Israel fights to defend its way of life from Hezbollah and Hamas and other radical Islamic terrorist groups, America will continue to support their efforts to defend their freedom.

As we fight to secure our homeland from future attacks by completing our mission in Iraq and hunting down terrorists around the world, I am proud we took the time last night to recognize Israel's struggle and express our solidarity behind them.

I would like to spend the rest of my time this morning talking about the energy crisis we are facing at home. Americans everywhere are paying the price.

For years, Democrats have complained about high energy prices and blocked the very solutions that would have lowered them and then attempted to blame Republicans for not doing enough.

American businesses, both large and small, are feeling the pinch. Recent estimates show that, since the year 2000, 3.1 million high-wage manufacturing jobs have been eliminated and moved overseas, where energy supplies are plentiful and costs are lower.

American families are struggling to make ends meet. In a recent survey, nearly 80 percent thought the rising cost of energy was hurting our economy and threatening jobs; 90 percent of those polled said that high energy costs were impacting their family budget. Despite having been through the warmest winter on record, heating bills for homes using natural gas went up over 25 percent. Last year, the percentage of credit card bills 30 days or more past due reached the highest level since the American Banking Association began recording this information in 1973. The ABA's chief economist cited high gasoline prices as the major factor.

One letter I received recently from a South Carolinian detailed how his father, who was on a fixed income, was forced to choose between paying for his medicine and putting gas in his car. Another constituent wrote that rising energy costs seriously threatened her family farm, due to the increased cost of vehicle operation, fertilizer, and irrigation.

With all this news, is it any wonder that Americans are discouraged when they see the partisan obstruction coming from Washington Democrats? The American people need answers, not